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## RESEARCH REPORT

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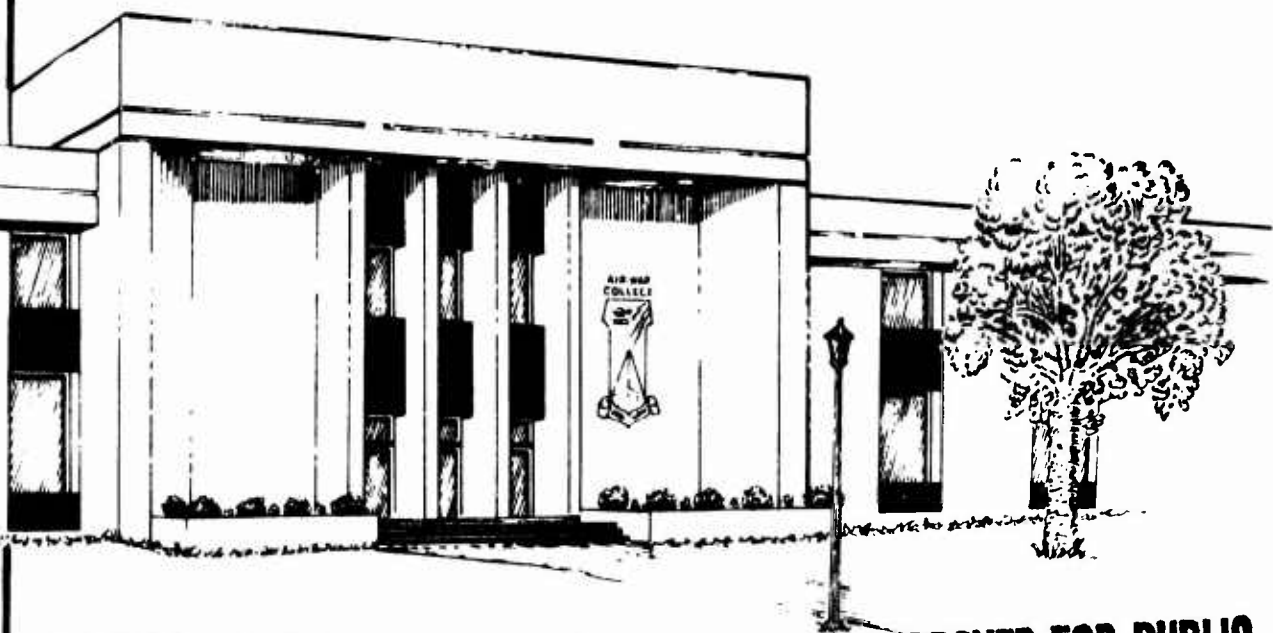
US ARMY AND US AIR FORCE:  
A HISTORY OF CONFLICT

By COLONEL GERALD R. DENNY, II

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UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
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US ARMY AND US AIR FORCE,  
A HISTORY OF CONFLICT

by  
Gerald R. Denny II  
Colonel, USAF

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

IN

FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH  
REQUIREMENT

Research Advisor: Colonel Bartley W. Furey, USA

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

TITLE: US Army and US Air Force, a History of Conflict

AUTHOR: Gerald R. Denny II, Colonel, USAF

►Traces the history of conflict between the United States' ground forces and air forces. Describes the causes of this conflict as organizational structure factors, human factors, and competition for limited resources. The author discusses the costs of conflict and three different approaches to resolving it. The author concludes that a major reorganization of the United States' military is required. ◀

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Colonel Gerald R. Denny II graduated from the United States Air Force Academy in 1966 and received his MBA from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1967. He has flown the tactical airlift mission in various models of the C-130 aircraft in Southeast Asia, Europe, and the United States. He graduated from the US Army Command and General Staff College and served as the MAC Liaison Officer to the US Army Combined Arms Center. As the commander of a C-130 Tactical Airlift Squadron, he has flown in many joint exercises and operations with Army airborne units, including the Grenada rescue mission. Colonel Denny is a graduate of the Air War College, class of 1986.

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## INTRODUCTION

As the military capabilities of airpower grew and became an essential part of land warfare, conflict developed between the traditional ground forces and the fledgling air forces. The initial conflict centered on attempts by airpower advocates to gain independence from ground commanders and to develop the full potential of airpower that would make it a decisive weapon in war. Countering this was the ground commanders' strong reluctance to give up control of the air assets they knew were essential to winning the land war. Once the Air Force gained its independence, the conflicts centered around competition over the defense budget and the Air Force's ability and willingness to carry out its mission of supporting the land battle. The rift between the two services has grown deeper over time as each has developed its own structure and doctrine. The conflict has increased because of differences in organization, conflicting and overlapping roles and missions, and different perspectives and experiences of the people who make up the two services. This conflict and its causes are so deeply rooted and so potentially disruptive in time of war that a major reorganization of the United States' military is required. The proposed reorganization would assign a major portion of US Air Force assets and almost all of the US Army to a new "Land Warfare Service" that would be responsible for all aspects of land warfare.

I guess we considered ourselves  
a different breed of cat,  
right in the beginning.  
We flew through the air and  
the other people walked on the ground;  
it was as simple as that! (18:205)

## A HISTORY OF CONFLICT

The history of conflict between the United States' ground forces and air forces probably started as soon as the first military aviator learned to fly. As the US army built large numbers of aircraft for the first time in World War I, the differences between those who "flew through the air" and those who "walked on the ground" began to become public. These differences grew during the years prior to World War II as the capabilities of airpower expanded and as it attracted converts to its cause. The events of World War II solidified the differences in missions and doctrine between the Army and the Air Corps. After the war the National Security Act of 1947 codified these differences by establishing an independent Air Force. Since that time, the two services have struggled through Korea, Vietnam, a host of contingency operations, and 40 years of battle with the Congress and OSD for a larger share of the defense budget. This last 40 years has been a continuous period of low level controversy and mutual misunderstanding, occasionally punctuated by public outbursts over missions and pacifying agreements imposed by the Congress or OSD.



### World War I

The United States' late entry into World War I and its inexperience with the use of airpower resulted in only a few public head-to-head disagreements between the proponents of airpower and those of land warfare. The emphasis in this war was the use of airpower in air-to-air battles and the "glamorous personalities that flew them." (11:22) While this concentration on the air superiority mission tended to increase the psychological distance between ground and air forces, it did not cause any great difficulties. This was because the ground forces had not yet discovered, or become dependent upon, the capabilities of airpower. It was not until the end of World War I that some rudimentary attempts to use airplanes to support ground combat operations brought the two into conflict. A German historian, von Hoepfner, described a situation that ground commanders probably claim happens today. "(Air units) received no directions from Army Headquarters located far to the rear. Therefore they lacked the possibility of coordinating their activities as to time and place with the events on the ground. Thus it happened frequently at the decisive point and at the critical time the troops failed to receive fighter support." (20:152) As the ground forces began to realize the capabilities of, and began to depend on, the support of the air forces to win the land battle, the seeds of conflict over control of these forces began to grow.

### Between World Wars

In the period between the two world wars the battle lines were permanently drawn. On one side were airpower enthusiasts who saw the aircraft as a revolutionary weapon that could win decisive battles and destroy the enemy without the need for ground forces. They felt that the proper employment of this weapon required a separate air force, out from under the control of ground force commanders who misapplied airpower and mistreated aviators. On the other side were the US Army commanders who saw the airplane as an evolutionary weapon that significantly improved and extended the traditional ground forces capabilities of firepower, maneuver, logistics, and intelligence. These ground force commanders were not willing to give up control of the assets they knew they needed to win a land war.

The battle for recognition of airpower and for an independent air force was often fought on a very personal level by proponents of both sides and these battles left bitter scars which are still visible today. General "Billy" Mitchell was courtmartialed for his outspoken support for an independent air force; and future Air Force Chief of Staff General "Hap" Arnold was threatened with courtmartial and then exiled to Fort Riley, Kansas for a similar "offense." (5:51) The ground force proponents were quoting Giulio Douhet who said "The only body competent to decide upon the

proper organization of this aerial auxiliary is the army or the navy...for they are in possession of the data necessary for determining the aerial weapons most suitable for furthering their respective action." (8:72) The airpower proponents were countering with General Mitchell who said "To entrust the development of aviation to either the Army or the Navy is just as sensible as entrusting the development of the electric light to a candle factory." (5:281)

The air proponents won a measure of independence as the United States approached World War II when the General Headquarters Air Force was established. This placed combat flying units into a separate command structure which reported to the War Department General Staff. Although this organizational change administratively removed air units from under ground force commanders, it did not settle the basic questions of how much airpower should directly support the ground forces, who should control it, and at what level.

#### World War II

During World War II, Army Air Force assets were generally organized into either strategic or tactical units. The strategic units, as today, had little direct contact with the ground forces and were not the focus for any great conflicts. The tactical air forces, however, were in daily

contact with the ground forces and were the cause of continuous disputes over control of air assets, proper application of airpower, and even treatment of airmen.

During the early months of World War II, airpower was parcelled out to ground force commanders to use as they saw fit in their individual area of operations. It was not until the Allied disaster at Kasserine Pass in North Africa that control of airpower was taken from the individual ground commanders and concentrated at theater level. The first official doctrinal support of this concept was promulgated in FM 100-20, Command and Employment of Air Power, in July 1943 which said:

Land and airpower are coequal and interdependent forces: neither is the auxiliary of the other. The gaining of air superiority is the first requirement for the success of any land operation....Control of available air power must be centralized and command must be exercised through the air force commander. (29:1)

Although it would appear from this field manual that the air and ground components of the US Army had agreed on this issue of control of airpower, FM 100-20 was published without the concurrence of the Army Ground Forces. (9:3)

In addition to the disputes over command and control, many World War II airmen felt very strongly that airpower was being misapplied by the ground force commanders. Max Hastings, describing the Normandy invasion in his book Overlord, said "The fundamental difficulty overhanging all Allied air support of operations in Normandy

was that...senior Allied airmen remained obsessed with their conviction that it was not the major function of their air forces to serve as flying artillery for the army." (12:267) Even General "Pete" Quesada of IXth AF, who was extremely supportive of the ground forces, said of the close air support mission, "Of course our army loved to see it before they went in. But it made me more skeptical about whether we should be using the air force as a USO show." (12:269) Airmen did not trust ground commanders who would risk aircraft and pilots' lives flying dangerous close air support missions whose only result seemed to be increased morale in the trenches. By the same token, ground force commanders felt that the airmen were "prima donnas" and not responsive enough to the needs of the land battle.

In a more subjective area, some airmen felt that their ground commanders did not appreciate their efforts and even treated the airmen unfairly. General Chennault, as the commander of the China Air Task Force (CTAF), blamed the theater commander, General Stilwell, and his staff for a decline in the morale of his air units because of this. Chennault said "Stilwell was indifferent to the achievements and problems of the CTAF except for occasional reminders to me that 'the men in the trenches' really won wars....Bissell consistently turned down CTAF decorations for gallantry in action on the grounds that the actions cited were merely 'in line of duty.'" (4:211) Even more

frustrating to airmen like Chennault was the theater commander's indifference to the capabilities of airpower. He said "During the entire time he commanded the CBI Stilwell never once sought my advice on aviation matters. What plans I submitted to him for my operations were perfunctorily approved but never implemented." (4:211)

Throughout World War II there were many examples of both close cooperation and mutual misunderstandings. The disagreements over allocation of airpower between the air war and support of the ground war diminished only after the United States fielded sufficient aircraft to fulfill both requirements. There was still dissatisfaction among the ground commanders over who should command and control air units and there was a continuing struggle by the airmen to disengage completely from the US Army by establishing an independent US Air Force.

#### Post World War II

In the years between the end of World War II and the end of the Vietnam period, the United States was involved in two major non-wars and several contingencies. In each of these operations the now independent US Air Force and the US Army were forced into uneasy alliances and makeshift working agreements that eventually resulted in reasonably effective cooperation for the duration of the operation. These arrangements seldom solved any of the basic disagreements

between the two services that continued to grow during periods of peace as each service built forces with little apparent regard for the battlefield needs of the other.

Immediately after World War II, the Air Force concentrated on the strategic bomber mission, which it considered its primary mission and which justified its continued independence from the US Army. This philosophy, when coupled with the reality of a severely reduced post-war defense budget, resulted in the virtual elimination of those air assets that most directly supported the US Army. Although close air support procedures were worked out during Korea, "the Army still complained that the quantity was insufficient, response too slow, and quality deficient due to the use of multi-purpose, too-fast jets." (15:19)

During the years prior to large scale United States involvement in Vietnam, the US Air Force continued to spend its budget dollars on strategic deterrence systems and air superiority fighters. As a result, the US Air Force entered this conflict unequipped and doctrinally unprepared to support the US Army. A 1965 House Armed Services Committee investigation of tactical aviation criticized close air support procedures, air-ground communications, lack of suitable aircraft, and USAF response times. During this investigation the Air Force admitted that it had not developed any aircraft for the close air support mission and was forced to rely on converted trainers and Navy developed

aircraft. (15:22)

During the late 1960's and early 1970's, public disagreements between the Army and the Air Force diminished, but the Air Force control of the air war in Vietnam was fragmented and Army dissatisfaction with Air Force response times continued. Because of the dissatisfaction and the increasing Army dependency on air-delivered firepower and on airlift for tactical mobility, the Army increased its efforts to build organic aircraft to fulfill these requirements. To help justify the development of organic aircraft for close air support, the Army created a new mission called "direct aerial fire support" (DAFS) which conveniently described the mission of a helicopter gunship. In addition, the Army created an airmobile division with 450 organic aircraft for tactical mobility and fire support. Although the DAFS mission was folded back into the close air support mission in 1970, and the Air Force fielded the A-7 in 1972, the Army continued to pursue acquisition of sophisticated attack helicopters. (9:32)

#### Post Vietnam

In the years since the United States ended its involvement in Vietnam, the conflict between the US Army and the US Air Force has continued and attempts to make any significant reduction in the primary areas of disagreement have failed. The AirLand Battle doctrine and the 31 point



agreement on US Army-US Air Force Joint Force Development Process have received much publicity as they addressed these areas of conflict, but have not yet produced results.

In the area of close air support, the Army has continued to purchase the AH-64 Apache attack helicopter to give the ground commander the responsive air support it does not feel the Air Force will provide. On the other hand, the Air Force has "contracted out" to the British the mission of point air defense of US airbases in England--a US Army mission. The surface defense of airbases has also long been an Army mission that it has been unwilling or unable to carry out. In response to this, the Air Force created its own infantry-like airbase defense units. During the Grenada rescue operation, the author witnessed a great unwillingness by the US Army to assume the airbase defense role for the Point Salines airfield even though it was their primary source of resupply. This issue has been addressed in the 31 point agreement, but has yet to be tested.

The US Air Force requirement to provide airlift for the Army, both intertheater and intratheater, has historically received a low priority in the Air Force. The Advanced Medium STOL Transport (AMST), an intratheater airlift replacement for the aging C-130 aircraft was canceled. The C-17, a multipurpose inter/intratheater aircraft that is essential to the US Army's deployment and employment capability has been continuously slipped.

Because these aircraft support Army requirements, they have not been able to successfully compete for budget dollars with weapon systems that support more purely Air Force missions. As a result, the Army has attempted to increase its organic lift capability through procurement of the CH-47D, the UH-60, and now the tilt-rotor CV-22.

The AirLand Battle is the US Army's latest attempt to describe how it will fight a major battle. Then Commander of the US Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), General Glenn K Otis said in 1982 that "AirLand Battle is now the doctrine of the US Army." (16:2) One of its primary architects, Colonel Huba Wass de Czege, wrote that "It stresses coordination of air and ground operations more strongly than any US doctrine since World War II." (23:55) However, other writers on the subject have said that the US Air Force "intelligence, target acquisition/destruction, and intratheater airlift capabilities fall short of the support required." (17:15) An equally serious problem with the AirLand Battle is that while it is Army doctrine and requires the Air Force for implementation, it has not been accepted as Air Force doctrine. In fact, some Air Force planners see it as an "Army effort to get the Air Force to attach a higher priority to battlefield interdiction and to win some measure of control over Air Force operations." (10:1277) Once again, there seems to be a serious disconnect in doctrine

and a fertile ground for conflict between the two services.

The 31 point agreement on US Army-US Air Force Joint Force Development Process has been cited as proof that the Army and the Air Force can work together to resolve disagreements on roles and missions. However, the majority of the 31 points do not take any action other than to establish joint working groups to study the problem areas. The two initiatives which would have required one service to transfer assets along with a mission change were subsequently overturned. The Army will not give up its Patriot air defense system, and the Air Force refuses to give up its HH-53 PaveLow helicopters.

In spite of new doctrines and joint agreements, basic conflict has continued to this day. A 1985 study by William Kaufman of Harvard's JFK School of Government says that the Army is buying "expensive attack helicopters and air defense weapons because it does not expect to be given the necessary support by the Air Force; the Air Force prefers to invest in long range fighter attack aircraft that can attack targets deep in the enemy's rear and conduct an interdiction campaign in the hope of winning the war regardless of what happens to the Army." (13:10)

We feel that in its magnificent accomplishments in the wild blue yonder, (the Air Force) has tended to ignore the foot soldier in the dirty brown under. (27:4872)

#### THE CAUSES OF CONFLICT

The long history of conflict between the US Army and the US Air Force has been caused by organizational structure factors, human factors, and competition for limited resources. The structural factors include the basic organizational mismatches between the two as well as the unresolved overlap and conflict between their roles and missions. The human factors include the differing perspectives of the people who make up each service and some common psychological traps that they fall into. Competition for limited resources is directly related to service competition for a larger share of the defense budget, which is never large enough to satisfy all the legitimate requirements of all the services.

#### Structural Factors

The structural factors which cause conflict between the US Army and the US Air Force are the basic organizational structures of each service which do not match up with each other and the mission priorities of each service which are equally mismatched.

The formal organizational structure of the US Army and the US Air Force are completely different. The Air

Force is functionally organized into the fighter command (TAC), the bomber command (SAC), the transport command (MAC), and so on. Doctrine in the Air Force is developed at the Air Staff, while each of the major commands develops its own "how to fight" concepts. The Army is divided into the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and the Forces Command (FORSCOM). Doctrine in the Army is developed by a major command, TRADOC, who also develops the "how to fight" concepts for the rest of the Army. This system works well for each service until it is time for them to develop joint doctrine or joint "how to fight" concepts. On matters of doctrine, TRADOC, a major command, cannot deal directly with the Air Staff, so they attempt to solve doctrinal matters with TAC, who must go to the Air Staff for approval. To solve joint "how to fight" problems, TRADOC must work with each Air Force major command that has an interest in the subject. General Robert J Dixon, then Commander of TAC, said that there is "no logical and natural connection between the concept development process in the Army and that in the Air Force," and that this "created awkward communications and inadequate results." (7:48) This mismatch in basic organizations makes it difficult to discuss or resolve differences in doctrine or employment concepts between the services and contributes to misunderstanding and conflict.

There are also serious structural mismatches in the

way that the Army and the Air Force organize to fight major wars. The Army fights battles with corps, while the Air Force fights the same battle with the air component of a theater level command. The Army's AirLand Battle doctrine is built around the corps as the highest level of tactical command. This doctrine's success depends upon the Air Force for long range intelligence, long range interdiction, battlefield air interdiction, close air support, and other standard Air Force missions. (23:56) The forces to conduct these air missions are apportioned by the joint (or unified) commander through the air component commander who allocates sorties to the ground component commander. The US Army's emphasis is on the corps, while the Air Force works almost exclusively at echelons above the corps. This can cause serious coordination problems as the various corps and the air component compete with each other for air sorties. The Battlefield Coordination Element (BCE) is an attempt to solve this problem by having Army representation in the TACC to coordinate with the air component commander; however, the head of the BCE is normally a colonel while the air component commander is normally a general officer. (2:10) This mismatch in rank does little to resolve the mismatch in level of command and responsibility between the corps and the theater air component.

Conflict between the US Army and the US Air Force is also caused by the different priorities each service places

on its basic missions. This is most evident in the close air support mission because it is here that the Army and the Air Force have their most continuous and critical interface. It is also evident in the tactical airlift mission and some others, but not with the same level of visibility or intensity that is seen in the close air support conflicts.

The primary mission of the US Army, as described in JCS Pub 2, is to fight the land battle, which includes defeating the land enemy and seizing, occupying, and defending land areas. The primary mission of the US Air Force is to fight the air battle. Only a portion of that mission is described as supporting the land forces. (26:18) The US Air Force has always placed air superiority above close air support, and well above tactical airlift. This difference in priorities has resulted in Air Force emphasis, both real and perceived, on developing aircraft and force structure for the air superiority mission to the detriment of those tactical air missions that the Army feels are essential to their primary mission. To fill these gaps, the Army has attempted to develop its own fire support and airlift aircraft. This causes conflict because the missions these aircraft perform overlap with Air Force missions, duplicate capabilities of Air Force assets, and compete with Air Force missions for budget dollars.

Although the air support systems developed by the Army usually originate as a specific piece of equipment with

a limited function, they have a tendency to grow. As technology expands the capability of a system, such as the attack helicopter, it can quickly become involved in Air Force roles and missions. The helicopter that was originally designed to provide fire support for ground troops soon adds a TOW anti-tank missile to improve its ability to defend them from enemy armor. Not long after, the threat from Soviet helicopters makes it logical<sup>to</sup> add some air-to-air capability. As the threat increases, it follows that this helicopter should have better armament and should fly faster and further. If not stopped by the constraints of conflicting roles and missions and the limits of a budget, this fire support system could evolve into an Army version of the F-16. Obviously, the overlap and duplication would not progress to this point; however, there are numerous cases of conflict caused by one service attempting to fulfill another service's mission that it has been unable or unwilling to perform.

#### Human Factors

A much more subjective area, but one that is certainly a primary cause of conflict, is the perspectives and the psychology of the individuals who make up the US Army and the US Air Force. A study on Army-Air Force relations by the Rand Corporation concluded that:

It is the predilection of ground commanders to achieve maximum independence and initiative through the



command and control of all resources, including air, involved in ground operations. Similarly, it is in accord with the natural preference of airmen to engage in air battle and to perform tasks that are independent and self-initiated, not tied directly to the needs and wishes of the ground forces....This is a fundamental divergence which has always existed and defies resolution because it is instinctive, rooted in the experience and psychology of the respective services. (9:42)

On a theoretical level, the Army and the Air Force have a different perspective of both doctrine and tactics. The Air Force views doctrine as "broad and continuing guidance on how Air Force forces are prepared and employed." (25:v) The Army vision of doctrine is more specific and includes "how to fight" concepts that the Air Force might consider procedures or, at best, tactical doctrine. Both services also view tactics from a different vantage point. The Army's tactics are terrain oriented because its mission is terrain oriented. Air Force tactics are firepower oriented because its mission is to destroy targets rather than seize and hold them. (3:8) These different perspectives produce conflict when the two services attempt to develop joint doctrine or tactics.

On a more practical level, soldiers and airmen also view their worlds from different perspectives, even though they are in the same battle, fighting the same enemy. There are those who say that the Army thinks at 2.5 miles per hour, an infantryman's pace, while the Air Force thinks at 600 miles per hour, the speed of a jet fighter. Although this is an exaggeration, it holds an element of truth. The

problems faced by each in combat are very different and result in different perspectives. The Army views the battlefield in geographical segments which are assigned to individual commanders. The Air Force views the entire battlefield, focusing on the enemy and targets rather than on the terrain. The people who fight and die in each service are also different. In the Army, the perponderance of soldiers in combat units, and the group that receives the most casualties, are enlisted. In the Air Force, the fighting and dying is done by the aircrew, the majority of which are officers, while the enlisted provide support at airfields further to the rear. These differences affect the way that the members of each service at all levels view their role in war and their relationship to the other services.

There are some common psychological or emotional traps that cause conflict between the two services. The primary cause of these is lack of knowledge of the other service, which results in misunderstandings and sets the stage for more problems. Today's military is large and complex. It is difficult for a smart soldier or airman to learn all he needs to about his own job and service. There is very little time and there are no institutional rewards for the individual who wants to understand the complexities and missions of another service.

It is human nature to rationalize failure and

attempt to place the responsibility for it somewhere else. Stanford University professor Lee Ross describes this tendency as "attribution error," in which responsibility for success is always claimed but failure is always blamed on the system or on someone outside of our area of responsibility. (24:58) An historical example of this is described by Max Hastings in Overlord. A large area of the Allied front was bogged down in France during World War II. The US Army was blaming the Army Air Corps for failing to stop the Luftwaffe's heavy air attacks which were causing the delays. Knowing that there was little German airpower in the area, General Quesada persuaded General Bradley to accompany him as he physically traced the source of the information on the air attacks. They eventually discovered that the Luftwaffe attack that had stalled the advance was "an attack by two German aircraft on (a regimental) command post, which had set a half-track on fire and wounded the cook." (12:273)

More recent examples of this attribution error were observed by the author as the commander of a C-130 Tactical Airlift Squadron working regularly with the Army's 82nd Airborne Division. Delayed airdrop missions were always the fault of the other service. The Army claimed that the aircraft were not ready to fly and the Air Force claimed that the paratroopers or equipment had arrived late at the aircraft. During one large JCS exercise, several

paratroopers were injured when they landed in some trees. The Army immediately assumed that the Air Force had missed the drop zone and was responsible for the injuries. This word was flashed to very senior commanders in both services, causing the expected embarrassment and fueling Army distrust of the Air Force's ability to support them in joint operations. When the facts were sorted out, it was discovered that the trees were on the drop zone and it had been approved by Army personnel. The fault, if any, was the failure of personnel from both services to understand the joint procedures for approving drop zones.

In these instances perhaps neither service should be blamed for assuming that the other was at fault because there are many historical examples where one service has been responsible for injuries or deaths in the other. During World War II, General McNair and 136 US Army soldiers were killed when a flight of American bombers dropped their bombs in the wrong place. (20:19) In a more recent case, the US Army suffered several casualties during the Grenada rescue operation when a Navy aircraft on a close air support mission attacked their position. During the airborne invasion of Sicily in World War II, a large number of American troop carrier aircraft were shot down by US Army and US Navy gunners as they approached the drop zone. Two nights later, 61 of 124 American troop carrier aircraft were shot down or severely damaged by combined German and

American ground fire. (6:240-2) Events such as these are long remembered and have a serious effect on the level of mutual distrust between the two services.

#### Resource Competition

A primary cause of conflict between the Army and the Air Force is competition for a larger share of the defense budget. This competition is not necessarily driven by selfish parochial interests, but is many times created as each service attempts to satisfy national security priorities in its own way. Most of this competition is unnecessary, however, and is caused by the failure of Congress and the Defense Department to make the difficult decisions that would separate and clarify the roles and missions of the Army and the Air Force.

The conflict between the Army and the Air Force as they fight for a larger share of the defense budget seems to increase during periods of peace. General Dixon says this is because "daily interaction lessened or vanished, the doctrinaires and budgeteers asserted themselves, arguments over roles and missions emerged or were deliberately advanced by those seeking to divide the military services." (7:45) While it is very likely that the lack of daily interaction contributed to the misunderstandings and conflict, a more compelling factor is that during times of peace there is usually less defense budget to divide

between the services. When the defense budget was severely reduced by President Eisenhower after the Korean War, the Air Force concentrated its priorities on building a force structure that satisfied the national strategy of strategic deterrence. This meant that those Air Force programs that supported the US Army were reduced or eliminated in favor of those that added to deterrence. In the 1970's, the competition between the Army's AH-56 attack helicopter and the Air Force's A-X close air support aircraft was not so much a battle for dollars as it was an honest attempt by each service to best satisfy a mission requirement from their individual perspectives.

The manner in which the Defense Department's budget allocation system works also contributes to this conflict. Because each service sets its own budget priorities, it can underfund a program that is essential to another service because it is not essential to the service that must fight for the funding. Even during the height of the Army-Air Force battle over the AH-56 and the A-X, the Air Force priority list placed the F-15, B-1, and AWACS higher than the A-X. (21:26) The close air support aircraft that will replace the A-10 and the proposed C-17 airlift aircraft are competing today against the Advanced Tactical Fighter, the Advanced Technology Bomber, and the "Midgetman" ICBM. Their relative standing on the Air Force's priority list will be determined more by the Air Force's perspective of how they

contribute to the Air Force mission than their contribution to the overall defense mission.

The primary reason this system continues to exist and cause conflict between the services is that neither the Defense Department nor the Congress has been willing to seriously consider revising the roles and mission statements of the Army or the Air Force. It has been easier and less controversial to make decisions based on the cost effectiveness of a particular weapon system and its development rather than on who should perform what mission for a more effective defense. If the missions of each service were reevaluated and the responsibility for the programs that support those missions aligned accordingly, there would be less conflict and a more effective military.

## THE COST OF CONFLICT

The conflict between the US Army and the US Air Force has had an overall negative effect of the ability of the United States to fight a major war.

Of all the services, the Army and the Air Force are the most dependent on each other for fighting wars. The Army depends upon Air Force airlift to rapidly deploy to war. Once there, it depends upon Air Force air superiority, close air support, and tactical resupply to fight the war. The Air Force, although it can be a decisive factor in winning a land war, cannot win that war alone. It depends upon the Army to seize, occupy, and defend the terrain that is essential to winning the land war. General Creighton W. Abrams wrote that "I have long believed that, since there exists in the Army and Air Force a unique complementary relationship to conduct warfare on the land mass, it is absolutely essential that a close relationship exist, at all levels, between the two services." (7:46) The missions of the two are so interrelated in war that the elimination of conflict is essential for success. Recognizing this need for cooperation, the two services have managed to reduce controversy to a lower level during wars. In regard to this cooperation, General Dixon said that "Conflicting doctrines were put aside and workable ad hoc procedures were established, particularly in the later stages of these conflicts." (7:45)



The fact that the Army and the Air Force were able to work together is important, but more important is that these accommodations took time to develop and did not really work until they had already been involved in a war for some time. Most military planners and analysts say that the next war will be a "come as you are" war with little time to prepare, build more weapons, or work out joint procedures. The historical trend has been for the Army and Air Force to fight each other in peacetime and then form an uneasy alliance during wars. General Dixon claims that:

Competing parochial interests often replaced logic as the common denominator in the force structure development and the weapon system acquisition process. Consequently, the potential combat capability within the resources allocated to defense was not reached. Differences between the military services led to budget reductions, reduced resources and/or reduced capabilities with the resources available. (7:46)

An additional cost of this interservice rivalry has been an erosion of public confidence in the military. Widely publicized disputes between the services over mission areas, budget allocations, and priorities leave the impression that the services are more interested in parochial interests than in the national defense. This conflicting relationship must be changed to one of cooperation and coordination during peacetime to insure absolute singlemindedness during war.

### SOME CURES FOR CONFLICT

The presence of interservice conflict is widely accepted; however, there is little agreement on the seriousness of its costs or the strength of proposed cures. Assessments of the damage caused by conflict range from minor, by those who view it as healthy competition, to predictions of impending doom by an increasing number of people. The cures for conflict also start at the low end of the scale, with recommendations for joint working groups and agreements, and progress through major reorganizations of the military. However, the most vocal critics of interservice conflict have recommended only relatively minor solutions for what they claim to be major problems.

#### Continue on Course

There have been several attempts since the end of the Vietnam War to improve working relationships between the Army and the Air Force. PAC and TRADOC have formed the Air Land Forces Application (ALFA) directorate to "assist in dealing with problems related closely to joint combat capability." (9:47) CINCUSAREUR and CINCUSAFE have chartered the Directorate of AirLand Forces Application (DALFA) to help solve operational problems between the Army and Air Force in Europe. MAC and TRADOC have recently formed the Airlift Concepts and Requirements Agency (ACRA)

to develop joint airlift concepts and doctrine which support Army, Air Force, and unified command requirements. There have been many other joint working groups and agreements. The one most publicly proclaimed in recent times has been the 31 point agreement on US Army-US Air Force Joint Force Development Process signed by the Chiefs of Staff of the Army and the Air Force. These working groups and agreements have made some progress in resolving some of the symptoms of interservice conflict, but they have not come to grips with the causes of the conflict. On the subject of interservice conflict, General Dixon said "the essential partnership cannot be concluded simply between the two principals: the same spirit of cooperation has to be reflected in the staffs and in the troops themselves." (7:46) To reduce conflict and instill this spirit of cooperation at all levels will take a stronger cure than joint working groups and high level agreements.

#### Reorganize the Staff

There is a very vocal group of people, from both inside and outside of the US Government, that feels that the cure for the problems of interservice conflict must include some kind of surgery at the Joint Chiefs of Staff level to repair the breach in these relationships.

A major study by the Senate Armed Services Committee Task Force on Defense Organization said that the problems

are so great that they "lead to critical gaps in warfighting capabilities, wasted resources through unwarranted duplication, interoperability problems, unrealistic plans, inconsistent doctrine, inadequate joint training, and ineffective fighting forces." (19:1) In spite of this extremely critical report, the type of surgery the Task Force recommended is relatively minor. They recommended only changes at the very top of the military system. Their proposed reorganization would give more statutory power to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, reduce the power of the Service Chiefs of Staff, and attempt to improve the quality of the Joint Staff by identifying officers with joint experience and encouraging their services to reward their joint staff performances with promotions. (19:7)

Even before the Senate Armed Services Committee recommended this staff reorganization, there were others with stronger solutions. A former Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, John C Kester, proposed a reorganization in 1981. His proposal would replace the JCS with a Defense General Staff (DGS) that would be manned by a cadre of professional general staff officers. He would have empowered the Chief of the DGS with the authority to select and promote officers for this staff and he advocated a "purple suit" uniform for DGS flag officers. (14:41-4)

Although these changes are viewed by many as being large scale, radical changes, they are relatively minor

attempts to repair what these studies have said are major problems. The causes of interservice conflict are so basic to the organization and perspective of each service that even major changes at the Joint Chiefs of Staff level will only create a more powerful arbiter of these conflicts rather than eliminate their causes.

### Reorganize the Military

To eliminate the major areas of conflict between the Army and the Air Force that hamper their ability to fight effectively will require a major reorganization of the United States' military. The problems of organizational mismatches, conflicting mission priorities, and parochial perspectives cannot be solved by shortsighted solutions that address only the effects of these problems rather than the problems themselves.

An award winning essay written by Commander John L. Byron for the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Individual Strategy Essay Contest proposes a reorganization of the US military that would eliminate the majority of these problems and would significantly reduce the interservice conflict that affects the military's ability to fight a land war.

Commander Byron proposes that the US Armed Forces be completely restructured according to the natural functional mission areas of land war, sea war, and strategic deterrence. The military service that fights the land war

would include all the military forces necessary to conduct that war. This would mean that tactical air, which is "no more than a projection of the land war into the third dimension over the extended battlefield," would become part of the land war service. Other forces which are essential to the land war, such as strategic airlift and sealift, would also become part of the land war service. (1:68-70)

The service that carries out the strategic deterrence mission would include bombers, ICBM's, ballistic missile submarines, continental air defense, and those forces that will make up the Strategic Defense Initiative. The sea war service would consist of the forces in today's Navy, minus the sealift and ballistic missile submarines. (1:73-4)

This reorganization would go a long way towards eliminating the basic causes of conflict between the US Army and the US Air Force. The organizational structure mismatches would be eliminated. The new land warfare service would include both air and land forces as integral parts of its organization. Doctrine would be developed and approved at the same level for the land forces as it was for the air forces. This doctrine would be genuine AirLand doctrine instead of doctrine developed by only the ground component of the forces who will fight the land battle. Training for land warfare could be greatly improved. Because land and air forces would be in the same service, most of the

obstacles to joint training could be eliminated. Joint training would become a way of life instead of an annual two week exercise in joint confusion. All of the forces that fight the land battle would work together everyday, as they have during past wars and as they will have to during future wars. Doctrine, tactics, and training for fighting the land war would be integrated in a single service rather than being composed of ad hoc working agreements and compromised joint doctrine.

With this proposed reorganization, conflicting service priorities could be more clearly defined and more easily resolved. Because the forces that fight the land battle would be consolidated under the same command structure, a single commander would be setting the priorities for both air and ground forces within the land warfare service. Competition between the land warfare service, the sea warfare service, and the strategic deterrence service would still exist, but it would be more clearly aligned with the primary mission of each. Budget competition would be between the broad mission areas of land warfare, sea warfare, and strategic deterrence rather than between services competing for a larger piece of the same mission. Under this system, budget priorities would match mission priorities which would be established by the President, Congress, and OSD. An effective, integrated military service to fight the land war would develop

strategy, plans, equipment and force structure during the relative quiet of peacetime rather than on the battlefield during the early stages of a war.

This reorganization may appear to be so radical that it will be dismissed before it is seriously considered. The service that will suffer the severest reorganization pains is the Air Force, which will be split between the strategic deterrence and the land warfare services. However, the basis for this split is already evident in the Air Force today. The missions of SAC, when compared to those of TAC and MAC, are so unique and completely different that there is no compelling rationale that demands that they all be under the same military department. The fact that SAC, TAC, and MAC all fly airplanes is not sufficient justification to force widely different missions into one organization. The mission should determine the structure of a military organization rather than the equipment it uses.

A reorganization of this scope will certainly cause a great deal of disruption in the United States' military; however, the nature of war and the technology to fight it are evolving so rapidly that some disruption is inevitable anyway. If we do not align our warfighting forces with their wartime missions while we are at peace, we will be forced to do it while we are at war. The forces of change which necessitated a separate Air Force in 1947 that could build a strategic deterrence force and establish the



principles of centralized control of theater air assets now demand a further evolution of the United States's military. The land battle has become so intertwined with the air battle above it that the two are inseparable. As the military expands its capabilities in space, it too will become enmeshed in the space-air-land battle. To attempt to fight this battle with forces from two distinct services whose structure, doctrine, and perspectives do not agree is to invite disruption, disunity, and disaster.

## CONCLUSION

There has been a history of conflict between the ground forces and the air forces in the United States' military. The establishment of an independent Air Force, while strengthening its ability to perform the air mission, has increased this conflict. As each service has evolved, it has developed different organizational structures, different doctrine, and conflicting perspectives on missions and priorities. The cost of this conflict has been reduced capability of the United States' military to effectively fight a land war. Attempts to resolve these differences have had only limited success because they have treated the symptoms of the conflict, not the causes. The causes of conflict are so deeply rooted in the structures and missions of the Army and the Air Force that a complete reorganization is necessary. The proposed reorganization will align the structure of each service with the major mission area it is responsible for and will result in less conflict and a more effective military.

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